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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002121

SIPDIS

STATE FOR P, NEA/NGA, EUR/SE, PMAT, AND PM/L; OSD FOR ISA,
ISP AND LEGAL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [I2](#)

SUBJECT: RESUPPLY OF TROOPS IN NORTHERN IRAQ: REQUEST FOR
GUIDANCE

REF: A) STATE 81560 B)ANKARA 2063

(u) Classified by Ambassador W. Robert Pearson. Reasons:
1.5 (B and D).

1. (U) This is an action request. See para 6.

RESUPPLY OF US FORCES

2. (C) A/DCM, ECON counselor and TF-N/J4 representative met with MFA DDG for the Americas Suna Ilicak and DDG for Bilateral Economic Affairs Mehmet Gucuk March 31 to discuss the possibility of the USG resupplying US troops in northern Iraq via Turkey (refs).

3. (C) Ilicak and Gucuk said they did not envision any problem with the USG request for US military authorities to contract directly with Turkish companies for the ground transportation of water purchased in Turkey. On the US request to transport US-origin MREs, however, the MFA officials said they would have to take the request to their higher authorities for a decision.

4. (C) On fuel, both Ilicak and Gucuk said that, in their opinion, it would be much easier for the US military to contract directly with Turkish firms (as opposed to going through the Turkish military) to procure/transport Turkish fuel, as well as to transport US fuel already in Turkey, to US forces in Iraq. The MFA officials said the US request on fuel already had been relayed to the GOT policy levels for a decision (ODC-TGS letter dated March 28 -- ref b). However, Ilicak and Gucuk cautioned if the GOT were to approve such a method of procurement/transportation of fuel, and the US were to elect to contract directly with Turkish companies, the GOT would have "no flexibility" on the issue of taxes (i.e., the USG would be required to pay taxes.) (Comment: this is not to say that Ilicak and Gucuk were implying that the USG would not/not have to pay taxes if the USG elects to work through gov-to-gov channels. They simply did not comment on this. End comment.)

SECURITY FOR TURKISH VEHICLES ONCE THEY ENTER IRAQ

5. (C) The MFA officials said that the GOT would be responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the commercial vehicles while they were in Turkey. What happened when the vehicles crossed the Turkish-Iraqi border was another matter and one of concern to the GOT. Ilicak and Gucuk said they envisioned three possible arrangements for ensuring the security/safety of the Turkish vehicles while they were in northern Iraq: (1) the USG provides assurances (in writing) that the USG will assume responsibility once the vehicles cross into northern Iraq; (2) the GOT will assume full responsibility; or (3) the USG and GOT will share responsibility and develop together appropriate measures. The MFA officials said they did not have a preference among the three options; their only request was that the USG advise (in writing) of its intention. (Note: our understanding here at post is that the US military is prepared to assume responsibility for the vehicles once they arrive in northern Iraq. end note.)

ACTION

16. (C) In the event the GOT approves our request to contract via commercial means the procurement and transportation of fuel to US forces in northern Iraq, we will have to address head-on the question of whether the US is willing to pay taxes on official purchases. The Embassy therefore requests guidance (if possible NLT OOB Ankara April 1) on how to proceed on this tax issue. Unless instructed otherwise, the Embassy/TF-N intend to notify the MFA in writing that the US military intends to assume responsibility for the security of Turkish vehicles transporting supplies for US troops once they enter northern Iraq.

PEARSON